

detail or disclose a centerbar disposed between side members and spanning the top frame member and the bottom frame member. The Examiner further stated that Christofferson discloses a filter assembly for a ventilating system having a centerbar 10, disposed between side members 6 and spanning the top frame member and bottom frame member 12. The Examiner concluded that "It would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide a centerbar as taught by Christofferson in the filter apparatus of McConnell, since it is well known in the art that the centerbar not only locks the filter member in the frame, but also reinforces the filtering member against rearward budging (bulging) under pressure produced by the air drawn or forced through the filter (page 1, right col., lines 19-26)".

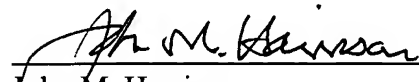
It is respectfully submitted that the Examiner failed to note that applicant's centerbar or centerbars, since more than one centerbar may be provided, is provided with multiple, spaced-apart slat openings "disposed in substantially coplanar relationship with corresponding ones of said slat seats and said side frame members; and a plurality of slats extending through said slat openings in said centerbar, with the ends of said slats seated in said slat seats in the side frame member" (Applicant's independent claim 1, in part). Each of applicant's independent claims 1, 22 and 27 include this or a similar recitation regarding slat openings provided in the centerbar(s), wherein the slat openings are provided in coplanar relationship with corresponding ones of the slat seats in the side frame members. The slats extending through the respective openings in the centerbar(s) serve to reduce warp in the slats (see applicant's specification, page 8, lines 8-11). A close review of the McConnell and Christofferson patents, as well as the other art of record, indicates that these patents fail to detail, suggest, indicate or teach a centerbar having slat openings for receiving the slats in applicants' air return grille. For example, Christofferson does

detail a centerbar 10, disposed between the side members 6 and spanning the top frame member and the bottom frame members. However, this centerbar is externally mounted to these members and does not accommodate the slats, as in the case in applicant's centerbar according to his independent claims 1, 22 and 27. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that this centerbar does not reduce warp in the slats and it would not therefore be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to provide one or more centerbars, each of which is fitted with multiple, spaced-apart slat openings for receiving the slats in an air return grille, as recited in applicant's independent claims 1, 22 and 27. It is therefore respectfully submitted that applicant's claims 1, 22 and 27, as well as dependent claims 2-21, 23-26 and 28-30, are not made obvious by McConnell or Christofferson, taken alone or in combination, and reconsideration and allowance of applicant's claims 1-30 as originally submitted, is respectfully solicited.

The Examiner further rejected claims 9-14 and 25-30 under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over the patent to McConnell taken in view of the Christofferson patent and further applied in view of either Lackey, et al, U.S. 6,918,940 or Vogt, et al, U.S. 4,689,058. Claims 9-14 and 25-30 are drawn in part to retainer clips mounted on the filter frame for removably mounting the filter on the frame. The Examiner noted that Lackey discloses retainer filter clips 32 mounted on a filter frame 12 for removably mounting the filter 26 on the frame 12. A close review of the Lackey patent reveals that this patent teaches the use of elastic bands 32 for the purpose, but not retainer clips as such. Furthermore, a close review of Lackey, et al reveals that this patent fails to teach or suggest the use of one or more centerbars having multiple, spaced-apart slat openings for receiving slats and a filter frame, as recited in applicant's independent claims 1, 22 and 27. The Examiner further noted that Vogt, et al, discloses filter retainer clips

20, mounted on a filter frame 10 for removably mounting a filter 16 on the filter frame 10. A close review of the Vogt patent reveals that the filter retainer clips 20 are also elastic bands and not filter retainer clips. Moreover, Vogt, et al, like the Lackey, et al patent, fails to teach or disclose one or more centerbars having spaced-apart slat openings for accommodating the slats, as recited in applicant's independent claims 1, 22 and 27. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that since claims 9-14 depend from applicant's claim 1, either directly or indirectly; claims 25 and 26 depend from applicant's claim 22 either directly or indirectly; and claims 27-30 include independent claim 27, claims 9-14 and 25-30 are not made obvious by McConnell, Christofferson, Lackey or Vogt, taken alone or in combination. This follows, since none of these patents detail a centerbar (or centerbars) fitted with multiple, spaced-apart slat openings for receiving the slats in applicant's filter frame. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that applicant's claims 1-30 as originally presented are in condition for allowance and reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-30 in light of the recitation of centerbar structure which is not made obvious by the art of record, is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



John M. Harrison  
Attorney for Applicant  
Reg. No. 24,968  
2139 E. Bert Kouns  
Shreveport, LA. 71105  
318/797-3062

November 30, 2005